

Gila River governor lists education as top priority

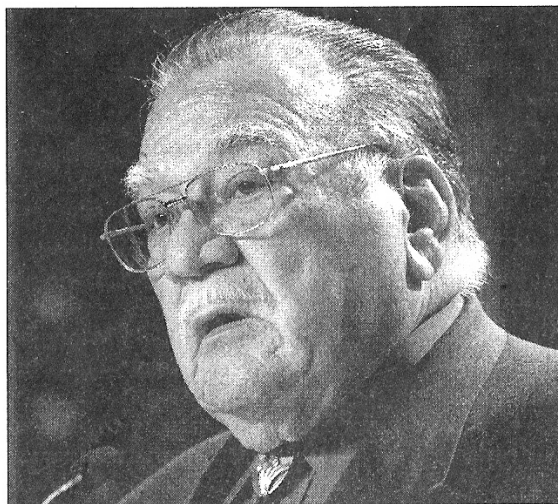
By Doug Murphy
Staff Writer

With a combination of pomp and circumstance, and Akimel O'odham tradition, the Gila River Indian Community celebrated the inauguration of Gov. William R. Rhodes Thursday.

"Today we declare, government is not the problem, and government is not the solution. We – the members of the Gila River Indian Community – we are the solution," said Rhodes, during his inaugural address to an attending crowd of more than 1,000 people at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort and Spa.

He defeated Mary Thomas in November 2005 for the three-year term. Thomas is a former governor and lieutenant governor of the tribe.

more Rhodes, see page 4



Brian A. Barbour/AFN

Gov. William R. Rhodes gives his inaugural address after being sworn in during ceremonies Thursday.

Page 4

Ahwatukee Foothills News • January 27, 2006

Governor

from page 2

Rhodes is a former chief justice, lieutenant governor and community council member.

He was born in 1933 and has also worked in law enforcement, including the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

He takes over at a time when the tribe has expanded non-gaming development, including last year's purchase and relocation of the Rawhide western theme park from Scottsdale.

It's also a time when the 600-square-mile reservation is facing pressure from urban growth on all

sides by neighboring communities.

While he did not mention the single-most important issue to residents in Ahwatukee Foothills, namely, the proposed Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway, Rhodes did say the No. 1 priority for his administration is education.

"I have made it clear that a solid education system is vital if we are to strengthen our community and provide hope and opportunity to the next generation," Rhodes said.

He also said that the Gila River Indian Community must learn to live within its means and do more with less.

Other priorities in his speech were to serve the elderly, expand economic development, strengthen law enforcement and address health and social issues.

Also sworn into office were Lt. Gov. Jennifer Alison-Ray and Chief Judge Victor Antone and associate judges Annette Stewart and Anthony Hill.

Rhodes is a U.S. Navy veteran. He and his wife Ruby Jackson Rhodes have 10 children, 23 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.

The reporter can be reached at (480) 898-7914 or by e-mail at dmurphy@aztrib.com.